

Commissioner Stewart Highlights The Importance Of Safety During The 100 Deadliest Days For Teen Drivers

Dover, DE-May 24, 2012-During this time of the year, teenagers are busy with proms, graduations and the beginning of summer vacation. May, which has been declared Global Youth Traffic Safety Month, also begins one of the riskiest times of the year for youth.

The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety calls the time between Memorial Day and Labor Day the “deadliest 100 days” for teen drivers. Reporting on this dangerous season, USA Today noted 7 of the 10 deadliest days of the year for teens fall between those holidays, while July and August are the deadliest months for 16- and 17-year-old drivers.

In Delaware and across the country, motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for teenagers, out-distancing deaths from homicide, suicide, other accidental injuries, drug dependency, cancer or heart disease.

- One in three teen drivers crash in his/her first year driving.
- Teens aged 16-19 are four times more likely to crash than the average driver.
- Car accidents are the number one killer of 16 to 19 year olds.
- 38% of teens involved in fatal accidents were speeding.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, an average of 422 teens die in crashes in each

of the summer months compared to an average of 363 teen deaths during the non-summer months.

The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety released a study noting some of the particular dangers facing young drivers – namely distractions caused by other teens in the vehicle. The study also showed that 16- or 17-year-old driver's risk of death per mile driven increases 44 percent when carrying one passenger younger than 21 (and no older passengers). The risk is double when carrying two passengers younger than 21, and quadruples when carrying three or more passengers that age. Another big risk is technology: 75 percent of teens acknowledge texting while driving is very dangerous, but only 43 percent admit to doing so.

Commissioner Stewart is very aware of this serious matter; therefore, the Delaware Department of Insurance has partnered with SmartDrive, a nonprofit organization that offers online courses to teens with a goal of reducing loss of life and property in senseless motor vehicle crashes. The program operates in 112 schools in 3 different states. They offer cash incentives, merchandise, and scholarships to program participants to help raise awareness for teen drivers. In 2011, Commissioner Stewart's dedication to this issue led to the creation of "Smart Skills", a hands-on driving program that serves as a graduate school to our current driver's education programs.

Commissioner Stewart stated, *"The Department of Insurance is excited to work with Smart Drive. We hope through this partnership our teen drivers in Delaware will be safer."*

On June 16, 2012, Commissioner Stewart and Department of Insurance staff will be supporting the work of the SmartDrive program at the Elsmere Community Days event. They will be sharing important information to educate our teens about the importance of safe driving. For additional information about this program, please visit their website at

www.smartdrivede.org. Also, our Consumer Services department is available to answer any questions you may have regarding insurance at 302-674-7310.